(vi) Widow/widower of the freedom fighter is also permitted to retain the accommodation for a period of six months after the death of the freedom fighter;

(vii) Accommodation in the Freedom Fighters' Home set up at New Delhi for freedom fighters who have no one to look after them.

(viii) In addition to the above facilities, ex-Andaman freedom fighters are also entitled to the following facilities:

(a) free voyage facility for freedom fighter and widow, to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands, once a year, along with a companion; and

(b) free air travel facility for freedom fighter, to visit Andaman and Nicobar Islands, once a year, along with a companion.

(ix) All major facilities provided to freedom fighters are also extended to their widows/widowers.

Killing of army officers by juniors

*150. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of army officers, during the last two years, were killed by their juniors;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to protect the lives of army officers?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) There have been one incident each in 2005 and 2007 and three incidents in 2006 in the Army where officers have been killed by their juniors. These are isolated incidents. The major causative factors identified for such killings are:-

(a) Stress due to prolonged commitment in counter insurgency environment.

(b) Perceived lack of concern shown by superiors to the problems of individual.

(c) Prolonged separation from family and difficulty in attending to family commitments.

(d) Low tolerance levels in certain soldiers further aggravated by stress full environment.

(e) Domestic problems like personal, marital, financial etc. causing heavy stress coupled with denial of leave leading to frustration.

2. The Government has taken several steps to reduce the stress among the troops which leads to such incidents. Some of these steps are:-

(i) Better man management and prompt attendance of grievances at Unit level. Improved accessibility of leaders and frequent interaction of junior leaders with the soldiers.

(ii) Some Junior Commissioned Officers of Army Medical Corps (AMC) have been trained and deployed as psychological counsellors in Northern and Eastern Commands.

(iv) Training of more JCOs and NCOs for acting as counsellors in units.

(v) The NCOs have been educated and sensitised to be alive to the sensibility of the troops.

(vi) Visits by senior staff officers apart from formation commanders to units to assess conditions of employment and living.

(vii) The training capsules on relaxation techniques including Yoga and Pranayam have been introduced.

(viii) Leave policy has been liberalised permitting splitting of annual and casual leave. The troops will now be able to go to their home towns on leave thrice a year instead of twice a year earlier.

(ix) Rotation of units and individuals to minimize exposure to stress.

(xi) All Chief Ministers have been requested to make the civil administration more responsive to the problems of serving soldiers and their families.

(xi) It has been decided to strengthen Rajya Sainik Boards and Zilla Sainik Boards in all States to take necessary follow up action on the grievances of soldiers in their home towns/villages.

(xii) A helpline with toll free number has been established.

(xiii) Efforts are made for identification and counselling of persons who are at higher combat stress by Regimental Medical Officers, junior leaders and unit commanders.

(xiv) Grant of additional rail warrant to go home or Selected Place of Residence of family to all ranks of armed forces serving in field/counter insurgency/ counter terrorist operational areas.

(xv) Rationalisation of scheme for LTC for both officers and Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBORs) and removal of restriction of 1450 kms for availing All India LTC.

(xvi) Grant of High Altitude (Uncongenial Climate) (HAUC) allowance at enhanced rates to troops deployed in more difficult, hazardous isolated areas within the existing HAUC areas.

(xvii) Under the Married Accommodation Project, houses are being built at different Stations to improve the availability of family accommodation.

Objective of NREGA remains unfulfilled

*151. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the objective of NREGA to eradicate poverty still remains unfulfilled since operationalising in February, 2006;

(b) whether Government are aware that provision of drinking water, sheds to children of the labourers and first aid is nowhere in sight; and

(c) if so, what is the reaction of Government?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) No, Sir. The basic objective of NREGA is to enhance the livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. NREGA as a wage employment programme has been able to generate 90.51 crore person days of employment in 200 districts in 2006-07 of which the largest share of benefits has been to the SC/ST /women beneficiaries. The works taken up under NREGA also aim at strengthening the natural resource base of rural livelihood. Thus, by augmenting wage employment opportunities and creating durable assets in rural area NREGA is able to alleviate some aspects of poverty. During the year 2006-07, a total of about 2.12 crore households demanded employment out of which 2.10 crore were provided employment. 90.51 crore person days of employment was generated out of which 22.95 crore (25.36%) were SC, 32.99 crore (36.45%) ST families and 36.79 crore (40.65%) for women. A total of 8.35 lakh works were taken up out of which 3.87 lakhs works were completed during the year 2006-07. A state-wise status report of implementation of the Act for the year 2006-07 is at Statement (*See* below).

(b) and (c) Para 27 of Schedule II of the NREG Act provides that the facilities of safe drinking water, shade for children and periods of rest, first-aid box with adequate material for emergency treatment for minor injuries and other health hazards connected with the work being performed shall be provided at the work site. Accordingly States are taking action to provide these facilities. The administrative expenditure of NREGA, out of which the worksite expenditure is met, has been enhanced from 2% to 4% to enable states to provide for worksite facilities.